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ABSTRACT

The Country Life Movement in the United States (1900-1920) emerged in response to the migration of rural people to the cities and the rising obsession with scientific knowledge. Modernizing rural areas and their institutions was seen as necessary to sustain rural communities at the economic and social levels of urban centers. Liberty Hyde Bailey, Horace Plunkett, and Theodore Roosevelt contributed ideas to the Country Life Movement. Three main themes of the movement were community sustainability, redirected community institutions, and participatory democracy. To this end, farmers were organized into cooperatives. Reforming rural education was central to the movement. The Cooperative Extension Service was born, and consolidated schools that served rural needs were advocated to connect farm families to their local villages. The Antigonish Movement in Canada (1920-1950) sought to build up the spiritual and material wealth of society by meeting the needs and concerns of local communities. The tool for this was extension education; experts were removed from universities and placed side by side with leaders in small, poor communities. The Annenberg Rural Challenge intends to become a millennial educational reform movement by recommitting to these earlier movements' principles of economic sustainability; pedagogy that uses the community as laboratory and text; involvement of parents, congregations, community leaders, and local businesses in the day-to-day activities of the school; and development of leadership through direct action on behalf of the community. (TD)

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ON LIVING WELL IN OUR PLACE:
Earlier Rural Reform Movements

Julie G. Canniff

Introduction

The Annenberg Rural Challenge, begun in 1995, seeks to revitalize rural schools and communities. It has developed around some of the following ideas: support for the value, the efficacy of small schools; a belief that in such settings students become well known and the educational exchange is more personalized, thus enhancing learning; that ties to parents can be more productive and local people more connected; that a good and enriching life is possible in rural communities; that schools and communities can assume greater, more reciprocal responsibility for social and economic revitalization.

There have, however, been earlier efforts with similar aims. This essay pursues two efforts which are worth thinking about, which grew up in times of change, that have some important parallels to the work of the Rural Challenge. They may prove enlightening.

American Rural Life Reform Movements:
The Country Life Movement 1900 - 1920

The transformations through which the United States is passing in our own day are so profound that... we are witnessing the birth of a new nation in America ... These changes are in part the result of... the age of steam production and large scale industry, and of the closing of the colonization of the West... The age of free competition of individuals for the unpossessed resources of the nation is nearing its end. [1]

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Profound change has been a part of America's rural landscapes and their institutions since the early 1900s. Social reform movements arose from the need to reconcile the transformation wrought by modern industrial America with the simpler, more intimate way of life in small towns and on the farms. The Country Life Movement was the first in a long series of national movements seeking to reclaim the values of America's democratic heritage through a redirection of the culture's central institutions – families, schools, churches, economic, and civic organizations. Reformers in the early part of the twentieth century believed that a new commitment to rural places and a respect for rural livelihoods was essential to the preservation of a modern civilization.

History

At the beginning of the century Theodore Roosevelt's presidency ushered in the new millennium almost simultaneously with the closing of the western frontier. The first decade of the twentieth century was characterized by a rapidly developing 'industrial class' and cities became not only destination places for the jobless, but centers of business, culture, and opportunity. Capital in the form of monetary exchange became the standard by which wealth was defined and sought. The prestige of the farmer and the clergy declined while "Captains of Industry" came to dominate the social and political landscape.

> *The masters of industry... regard themselves as pioneers under changed conditions carrying on the old work of developing the natural resources of the nation... to expand the horizon of the nation's activity and to extend the scope of their dominion.* [2]

The period from 1900 to 1914 was one of great prosperity for progressive Western and Midwestern farmers and with that prosperity they modernized their farms by introducing new labor-saving equipment, and scientific practices. They also wielded significant political power at the state and federal levels.[3] By contrast, in the Northeast and the South, because of the cost of mechanization and the lure of better paying jobs in the cities, whole families migrated, renting their farms to new immigrants or abandoning homes and land altogether. The combination of mechanization and migration eventually forced the consolidation of small family farms all across the nation into large, and very often corporate agribusinesses.

Roosevelt's presidency was synonymous with the Age of Progressivism. Progressive thinkers such as Gifford Pinchot persuaded Roosevelt to focus attention and resources on conserving America's natural resources, particularly the forests, and undertake scientific programs of land and water reclamation. Pinchot was joined by academicians and politicians who recognized that the closing of the western frontier meant that natural resources from now on would have to be "managed" in order to provide enough food for a growing population, and still secure areas of wilderness so fundamental to America's spirit.

Progressive ideas were founded on applying scientific knowledge and techniques to everything from sanitation to elementary education. The ideas were taken up by social

reformers and implemented first in fighting the problems of the cities – overpopulation, housing, lack of education and work skills, immigration, and disease. But a few experts urged Roosevelt to undertake rural reform as well. In the final year of his presidency, he responded to a report from Sir Horace Plunkett, a close advisor and active agricultural reformer in Ireland. Plunkett pointed out that the problems of rural America could be resolved in three ways: make farmers better business people; build up the social and intellectual life in rural areas; and redirect the education of farmers and their children toward modern scientific agricultural practices. [4] He persuaded Roosevelt that a national reform movement was needed to accomplish these three goals which, if successful, would make farmers more competitive with industry, and stem the flow of 'native stock' to the cities.

On Plunkett's advice, Roosevelt formed the Commission on Country Life and sought as its chairman, agriculturalist, academician and philosopher Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell University.[5] Bailey's ardent advocacy of the American farmer had long stressed that the core of American civilization rested in small farms and communities. He noted:

> *Civilization oscillates between two poles. At the one extreme is the so-called laboring class and at the other are the syndicated and corporate and monopolized interests... between these two poles is the great agricultural class which is the natural balance-force or the middle wheel of society. These people are steady, conservative, abide by the law and are a controlling element in our social structure.* [6]

Historian Richard Hofstadter coined the phrase "agricultural fundamentalism" to refer to this spiritualization of country life which placed the farmer and the farm at the nation's moral and civic center, "...the farmer is the incarnation of the honest, healthy and happy man; farming is important for its moral and civic influences on the nation."[7] Roosevelt eagerly played this expressive chord within the American psyche to focus national attention on the revitalization of rural America, suggesting:

> *Our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness and the completeness as well as the prosperity of life in the country. The men and women on the farms stand for what is fundamentally best and most needed in our American life.*[8]

Educators and Philosophers

The Country Life reformers, fearing the eclipse of the country in favor of urban values, advocated changes to country life which stressed organization and cooperation, standardization, and mechanization. Philosopher/scholars such as Liberty Hyde Bailey, Sir Horace Plunkett, Dr. Joseph Hart, Mabel Carney, Elwood Cubberley, and John Dewey introduced both spiritual and pragmatic ideas of community, democracy and place-based education into the discussion. The life of the open country was to be spiritualized and modernized – the instrument for both was education. Just as urban progressive educators were turning to education to 'Americanize' the waves of immigrant children entering the

public schools, so rural progressives turned to education as the panacea for resolving the problems of farm-life.

Liberty Hyde Bailey

Liberty Hyde Bailey, Dean of Cornell's College of Agriculture from 1903 to 1913, is widely considered to be the father and prophet of the Country Life Movement. He was among the first to write about the 'holy earth' as the consummate foundation upon which the American civilization was based, and as early as 1896 he was calling for the need to study the problems of the open country. Bailey believed strongly that the revitalization of the open country could only be accomplished by first establishing a new social order which was rooted in the spiritual values of the land.

> *As the people progress in evolution, the public mind becomes constantly more sensitive to the conditions in which we live and the appeal to the spiritual satisfaction of life constantly becomes stronger. Not only shall the physical needs of life be met but the earth will constantly be made a more satisfactory place in which to live.... We have been living in a get-rich-quick age. Persons have wanted to make fortunes. Our business enterprises are organized with that end in view. Persons are now asking how they may live a satisfactory life rather than placing the whole emphasis on the financial turnover of a business. There is greater need of more good farmers than of millionaires.* [9]

Bailey's solution was to revitalize the farm and farm community through modernizing its central institutions – family life through intellectual and cultural opportunities, the school and church through redirected curricula and the social gospel, and the community through cooperative organizations and improved communication with the larger world. Education and cooperation were central to the enterprise and if implemented according to scientific principles, he believed "ignorant, selfish individualism" would be eliminated.

Most, if not all, of Bailey's ideas were incorporated into the Country Life Movement. The following were central tenets:

> • *One does not act rightly toward one's fellows if one does not know how to act rightly toward the earth – thus more people should own their own land.*
>
> • *Society moves between two poles – syndicated and corporate interests, and the laboring class. Both are by nature lawless. Only the landed class and the working classes are stable.*
>
> • *Man's existence lies beyond the ledger; life is not a pocketbook... life requires spiritual satisfactions and art. Great gains come from service to one's fellow man and from making something for the love of it.*
>
> • *No person should grow up without definite training for public service.*
>
> • *Cooperation is everything that develops the common commercial, intellectual,*

recreative and spiritual interests of the rural people.

• A viable religion should be based on constructive work in society rather than in doctrines.[10]

But it was Bailey's philosophy about schooling, from his position as a scientist and an educator, that was so radical. Inspired by the accounts of Danish Folk Schools and Dewey's progressive schools, Bailey insisted that the basic function of a rural school is to fit rural pupils for country life. However, young people were not the only beneficiaries of his enlightened pedagogy; Bailey also believed that education was the single means by which farmers and their wives would develop the farm community into a vital and compelling place to live and work. He saw in schools and communities a natural reciprocity.

Sir Horace Plunkett

Plunkett brought a unique perspective to America's rural problems. Born to wealth, highly educated and a long-time politician, Plunkett captured Roosevelt's attention during a number of discussions about American agriculture and its problems. Having studied in great depth the causes and consequences of Ireland's land problems, as well as having considerable experience with cooperatives, Plunkett's insights about the needs of America's farmers carried great weight with the President.

Plunkett's view of farming was to make the farmer competitive with industry – this meant organizing and combining resources to protect one's markets and eliminate the middleman. "Farming is a business and through scientific practices, increased credit and organizing for their economic power, they would increase their income and thus solve their social problems."[11] In order to implement modern business practices, Plunkett believed the farmer and his wife had to be re-educated. While education was being redirected to "develop in the country the things of the country," Plunkett also insisted that the farmer take advantage of education to enrich the mind and the spirit. By attending to all three of these goals simultaneously, Plunkett was convinced that rural areas could create sufficient counter-attractions to urban life to stay the exodus from the land.[12]

Theodore Roosevelt

Theodore Roosevelt contributed his own ideas to the country life movement, which though influenced by his close advisors, were part of his philosophy of democracy. He stood between Jefferson and Hamilton in his beliefs that the small land holder, the homesteader, was the economic and social core of the nation. He celebrated the self-reliant, rugged individualist farmer who represented the strong moral fiber of the country. At the same time, he sought to solve the problems of the farm through bigger government programs and expanded educational institutions - in other words an expanded national government.

A thread of racism was deeply woven into Roosevelt's perception of the rural life problem. He urgently sought to maintain the native American (European) stock (versus immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, African Americans and Mexican-Americans) as perpetual landowners. Roosevelt, like many of his contemporaries, considered that the real wealth of the country was in the land, and that there was a need to keep

landowners on the land. They believed that as superior native stock was replaced by inferior, uneducated tenant farmers, the very foundations of American democracy would be in danger.

> *... if there is one lesson taught by history, it is that the permanent greatness of any state must ultimately depend more upon the character of its country population than upon anything else. No growth of cities, no growth of wealth can make up for loss in either the number or the character of the farming population.*[13]

> *Tenant farming is on the increase and is now characterized by a different kind of people. Earlier immigrants were German, English, Scot and Scandinavian – from lands where general education and a relatively high degree of civilization prevailed. These were intelligent, thrifty and law abiding people.*[14]

> *The cornerstone of every successful rural social order is that land shall be tilled by those who own and cherish it... solving the farm problem means holding landowners in the country.*[15]

Ideas and Themes

The principal impetus of the country life movement was the need to reconcile the traditional values of the country with the modern ambitions of the city.

> *If we have very highly developed persons in the city, we have very rugged persons in the country. If the sense of brotherhood is highly evolved in the city, individualism is strongly expressed in the country. If the world-movement appeals to men in the city, local attachments have great power with men in the country. If commercial consolidation and organization are characteristic of the city, the economic separateness of the man or family is highly marked in the country.*[16]

The Commission on Country Life was created at a time when Americans were both fascinated and repelled by the modern metropolis. The generation which had survived the economic panics of 1873 and 1886 was nostalgic for the simple traditions of agrarian life, consequently, the publicity around the Commission's work fueled a national obsession with rural life. Some of the issues they identified included the loss of deeply spiritual values representative of an agrarian civilization, concerns about massive migration to the cities, already overcrowded, and fears that loss of superior native stock on American farms would jeopardize the agricultural productivity essential for a growing population. Businessmen in small towns as well as the cities also needed the revenue from prosperous farm families to stimulate the national economy. It was in everyone's best interest to modernize rural areas and their institutions thereby sustaining rural communities at the economic and social levels of urban centers.

The philosophy of the Country Life Movement which emerged to resolve these issues incorporated three themes: Community Sustainability, Redirected Community Institutions, and Participatory Democracy:

Community Sustainability

For the most part Country Life scholars were writing about sustaining the "family farm" as a viable economic and socially progressive unit. "It is commonly thought that community life... means living together in centers or villages. I conceive that it is possible to develop a very effective community mind whilst the persons remain on their farms."[17] The small town was characterized as both serving and exploiting the farmer. It provided a centralized location for such essential institutions as banks and credit unions, the postal service, schools, churches, libraries and cultural organizations, while at the same time it controlled the means of distribution for farm products and communication with the world outside village boundaries.

> *In America the town dominates the country and the machinery of distribution is owned by the businessmen of the towns – it is worked by them in their own interests... they take from unorganized producers and consumers the full business value of the service they render.*[18]

> *Large experiments in politics and in cooperative distribution, ventures requiring knowledge, courage and imagination, do originate in the West and Middle west, but they are not of the towns. They are of the farmers. If these heresies are supported by the townsmen it is only by occasional teachers, doctors, lawyers, the labor unions, and workmen... who are punished by being mocked as 'cranks.' The editor and the rector preach at them.* [19]

Bailey and others stressed that the central purpose of the reforms was to "raise up" the living for people whose families had lived for generations on the farms. This was not to be confused with a popular trend among affluent suburbanites who were beginning to invest in country homes in order to escape from the stresses of the city, "... we must be careful not to confuse suburbanism and gardening with country life. To have any effect on rural development a person must become a real part and parcel of the country life."[20]

Joseph Hart in *Educational Resources of Village and Rural Communities* (1914) defined what he and other rural life reformers considered to be the elements of a positive community spirit:

> *1. The physical resources of the community will condition the life and action of the child.*

> *2. The older beings of the community will determine the social world within which the child grows to maturity and responsibility.*

> *3. Economic relationships and the industrial life will determine the way a child thinks, talks as well as the range of his opportunities and the bent of his common interests.*

> *4. The health of the community in hygiene and sanitation will determine the efficiency and energy of the growing child.*

5. The child will feed upon traditions, folktales, heroic stories, desires, prejudices, hatreds, feuds and friendships of the community.

6. The community government will control and manipulate his chances of life.

7. The home will be a place of beauty, life and culture.

8. Wholesome recreation and play will restore strength spent in work and prepare him for serious doings of mature years.

The report of the Country Life Commission cited a number of deficiencies which threatened community sustainability including a lack of knowledge of the local regions, a lack of training in school for country life , lack of good highways, bank credit and health practices, and the need of well prepared, new leaders.[21]

Reformers identified three strategies for sustaining rural communities: cooperation, education, and the application of modern scientific practices. Bailey, Plunkett, Roosevelt, Carney, Cubberley and many others confirmed that physical, social and intellectual isolation lay at the heart of many rural life problems. According to them, isolation bred provincialism which made rural people wary of modern, progressive ideas.

... the farmer is everywhere the most conservative and individualistic of human beings. He dislikes changes in his methods and venerates those which have come down to him from his fathers' fathers. Whatever else he may waste, these traditions he conserves.[22]

The competitor to the individual farmer was the corporation which had access not only to more raw materials, but wider markets. As a corporate entity it was efficient and effective; it could wield power in ways the individual could not. Rural reformers thus denounced the isolated farmer and urged him to organize. Plunkett wrote that the key to better business in rural areas was the agricultural and/or business cooperative which could exert political influence on government and other power structures.

... the work will mainly be that of active organization and will be concentrated on the business methods of farmers... the first step toward a general reconstruction of country life is cooperation.[23]

It is a curious paradox that the rural life reformers who believed so strongly in farming as a way of life exemplified by individualism and self-sufficiency were at the same time pushing them to organize themselves into modern businesses. Roosevelt, in fact, believed the Country Life Movement should accomplish this transformation.

The farmer must not lose his independence, his initiative, his rugged self-reliance, yet he must learn to work in the heartiest cooperation with his fellows... a single farmer today is no match for the corporations, railroads and business enterprises with which he must deal. Only through cooperative organizations can our farmers

build up their strength. A balance of government action and self-help is the answer.[24]

Bailey believed that organization and cooperation would also sustain the community spirit. He was convinced that the Country Life Movement could create rural organizations which, "could supply as completely as the city the four great requirements of man, health, education, occupation and society."[25] Farmers eventually came to accept the need for organization, particularly around purchasing and marketing cooperatives; they organized credit unions, standardized work hours, and invested in cooperatively-owned machinery for processing crops.

Redirected Institutions

The central theme of the Country Life Movement, as well as a strategy for community sustainability, was education. Virtually all of the writers and philosophers of the Movement stressed that education should prepare students for life - particularly life in the open country. Thus, all life experiences qualified as education and the community was understood to be a central educational environment. Bailey argued that "Education is not confined to the institution known as schools. It is the result of all experiences and all training."[26] Bailey's master plan for the redirected school incorporated three elements of effective education which he, and others, believed would transform education in general and the rural schools in particular. An effective education should

- *develop out of personal experience,*
- *relate these experiences to a vocation or to the pupil's part in life, and*
- *ensure that every school should be the natural expression of its community.*

Joseph K. Hart, rural sociologist and educator at the University of Washington, reminded his students that the community is the "true educational institution." Through the local institutions of kinship, church, school, library, economic and political organizations,

> *... all education was practical because it was wrought out of the very life of the community; thorough because the tests were those of life itself and the active world passed upon one's qualification; moral because it was the community's own life and purpose wrought into the life and purpose of the maturing child. Such education was complete only when the child was thoroughly equipped with the skill and desire to continue the traditions and interests of the community.*[27]

In the minds of the reformers, the first twelve years of education should prepare the young person to live well in his or her local environment; the farmer needed training and instruction to be able to apply the teachings of modern science to the practice of farming and modern economics to the running of a business; the farm wife needed training and instruction to be able to run an efficient, and hygienically sound household. In order to meet these demands, scholars in state universities offered advice on everything from the

proper type of public school building, to the content of curriculum, to the preparation of country teachers. The same universities, utilizing their extension education divisions, began placing agents in rural communities throughout the country. It wasn't long before "agricultural demonstration work became one of the chief devices used by reformers to promote their program of changes."[28]

But it was the public schools which became the focus of the Country Life Movement. Elwood Cubberley, an outspoken and opinionated writer, placed the success of the rural life reform squarely on the rural school. He echoed others who denigrated the memorization of facts and learning from books as ineffective and unlikely to adapt a man or woman for life in the country. Cubberley's goals for the redirected school were far more specific than Bailey's.

> *1. The rural school must abandon its city ideals and standards.*
>
> *2. The school must develop its instruction with reference to the environment, local interests and needs.*
>
> *3. Put pupils into sympathetic touch with the rural life around them.*
>
> *4. Emphasize vocations of the home and farm which is the natural destiny of the students.*
>
> *5. Reach out to the life of the community and influence it for good*[29].

Rural life philosophers extolled the virtues of the rural school pointing out the advantages of smallness, simplicity and its closeness to the actual conditions of the people.

> *... because the school was the last of the social institutions developed to meet a social need, it would have been the part of wisdom for the school to be modest and to learn to adapt itself to the changing conditions in the life of the community, striving ever to do those things which were not being done by some other element of the community life.*[30]

They referred to the public school as "a natural organic center where persons may naturally meet and where a real neighborhood interest exists"[31] and "a chief immediate agency for up-building the country community."[32] The task of the rural school is to "make a strong binding union of home and school, the farm methods and the school methods."[33]

Nonetheless, national education associations and commissions, under pressure from the economic sector, began a national program of setting standards as to graded classes, curriculum, graduation requirements, the length of the school year, the competence and preparation of teachers, and universal testing arrangements. Cubberley and others countered with demands for school standards which reflected the conditions of rural communities rather than standards followed by urban school districts. They emphasized that the curriculum should be related to agricultural and home science and should

determine the means by which the school prepared a student to take his or her place in the farm economy. The reformers were especially critical of the teachers who came to rural areas and the pedagogy they imposed on their students. Cubberley insisted that:

> *The teachers, trained in city schools, did nothing to make the rural school minister to the needs of rural life... the teacher developed little interest in the rural community and the community lost interest in the teacher and the school.*[34]

> *The uniform textbooks were written primarily for the city child... the graded course of study superimposed from above was a city course of study ... the ideals of the school are city and professional in type... city educated and trained teachers overemphasize the affairs of the city.*[35]

Bailey, in particular, stressed the need to "teach the objects and affairs of the local environment." Some of his thoughts about the actual work of public schools include:

> *We must outgrow the sit-still and keep-still method of school work. I want to see our country school houses without screwed-down seats and to see the children put to work with tools, soils, plants and problems.*[36]

> *A child does not learn much when he is silent and inactive. Out of this work will grow the necessity of learning to read, and figure and draw.*[37]

> *We over-emphasize the importance of mere verbal accuracy and breed in our pupils a depressing fear of making mistakes.*[38]

> *The habit of self-expression in song and music needs much to be encouraged in home, school, grange and church... drama should represent the harvest, the seasons, the history and traditions of the neighborhood or region.*[39]

> *The study of history should result in better local civic ideas.*[40]

> *The principles of number are everywhere the same; but there is no reason why practice problems should not have local application... when the child takes home a math problem that has application to the daily life there is a different attitude on the part of the parents to the problem and to the school.*[41]

> *If geography is taught let it be taught in terms of the environment... we are now interesting the child in the earth on which he stands and as his mind grows we take him out to the larger view.*[42]

> *There is as much culture in the study of beet roots as in the study of Greek roots.*[43]

William Bowers suggests that while scholars like Bailey, Carney, Foght and Hart promoted radical and progressive new theories tailored to the rural school, in reality many of the farmers actively opposed efforts to change the schools. Arguing that it was

reading and writing which "spoiled" their children for a life working on the farm, some farmers declared that better education would be gained through direct experience in laboring on the farm. According to Bowers, other farmers complained about the small one-room schools and the education their children were (not) getting. For them, education was meant to help their children pursue many different options in life. Still others fiercely resisted the national movement to consolidate small schools into large, anonymous districts far from local farms and homes.[44]

The second and equally important institution which came under scrutiny during the rural reform movement was the church. In 1911, Elwood Cubberley observed at the Michigan Rural Life Conference that, "there were 10,000 dead rural churches in Illinois, 10,000 more about to die and 500 already abandoned." He, and others, laid the blame for this condition on the rural church's self-righteous piety and absorption with irrelevant dogma. A church which continued to repress the young for sin and corruption instead of providing leadership and guidance in social service was, reformers argued, a church unwilling to adapt to modern times. Bailey accused the country church, much like the country school, of being stultifyingly orthodox and unconcerned with the vital affairs of the community.

> *The rural church has no organic connection with the life of the community; in this regard, being worse off than the school. It needs spiritualizing... why not make a country church a social center, letting it stand for good works in everything that interests the community and placing it in some direct relation to vocation.*[45]

Those who affirmed Bailey's belief in the need to spiritualize all country institutions, faulted the church for viewing religion as something external and apart from daily life. If the church were sufficiently aligned with needs and concerns in the community, it would, they suggested, provide the ideals which inspired leadership. Those who tended toward pragmatic ideas, focused on the preparation of ministers for rural churches much as they demanded similar preparation for rural teachers. Ministerial colleges and seminaries were exhorted to unite with normal schools and departments of agriculture to instruct the future clergymen in rural problems and the way of life in the country. Sir Horace Plunkett believed that a clergy educated in the social and economic conditions of the country would take a leadership role in supporting economic cooperatives. The Commission on Country life stated, "... the country pastor must know the difficulties the farmer has to face, some of the scientific revelations of agriculture and the fundamental social problems of the life of the open country.[46]

Perhaps the single greatest threat to the small country church as well as the small country school was the so-called 'intellectual revolution' which canonized the essence and application of modern science. More than anything else, the obsession with scientific knowledge and principles contributed to the decline of the spiritual in country life. Science represented progress and certainty, not tradition and superstition. The science of economics preached organization, efficiency and market strategies. The clergy, once revered as men of power and prestige, were overshadowed by the successful entrepreneur. The reformers embraced the gospel of competition which exhorted the ambitious to think and plan with an urban frame of mind.

Consolidation

In spite of their commitment to revitalizing rural institutions, virtually all Country Life reformers advocated consolidating schools and federating churches in order to conserve resources and improve professionalism (though they would have been shocked by the kind of consolidation that developed in the middle decade of the 20th century). In the early 1900s one room schools and tiny churches, the sentinals of rural life, could be found wherever there was a cluster of farms. Initially, the consolidation movement advocated closing one room schools which served one or two farm families and transporting the students into more centrally located small towns. Roosevelt's policy of developing an extensive rural road system facilitated this objective and the small district school was created to accommodate farm children along with town children.

> *The consolidated school is distinctly the product of evolution in country life affairs... it has developed into an effective instrument for redirecting and revitalizing country life. Almost unlimited are the opportunities for service in the field of community building, cooperation and education in the open country with the consolidated school as the solid basis. The solution of rural problems must grow out of the soil , it will not come from country life offices in city skyscrapers.*[47]

Protestant denominations began to follow suit and consolidated small churches in towns and in some cases consolidated different denominations under one federated church.

The Country Life reformers believed that consolidation would, in fact, work to their purposes by enabling towns to build a modern, scientifically designed school complete with teachers and administrators trained in agricultural and home sciences. "...the best administrative unit for the rural school is the township unit – the small local district unit is too subject to partisanship, lack of funding and professionalism."[48] The one room, multigraded elementary school would be transformed into a larger age-graded school including both primary and secondary levels. The redirected curriculum as noted above, would begin by teaching basic academic knowledge and end by incorporating agriculture and nature study into every content area. For farm children, the consolidated school provided the first opportunity for them to attend a high school in which they would have opportunities to explore art, athletics, music, manual training, agricultural and domestic science.

But above all, the consolidated (town) school would become the heart and center of the country community.

> *The consolidated school builds up the country community. It defines community boundaries and establishes a community sense. It overcomes petty jealousies, swallows small differences, enlarges and intensifies the community idea into something significant... To it will turn the old man and the kindergarten child. Tired mothers will visit it and learn how to prevent their weariness; discouraged farmers will call upon it and absorb the courage of its new science. Young people will come because it reflects life's best inspiration and hope.*[49]

Bailey believed, however, that there was a danger in centralizing interests too far from the family farms and that drawing young people off the farms and into the towns could set

the stage for a future exodus to the cities. Nonetheless, Bowers writes that ninety-five percent of the farmers who gave consolidated town schools a fair trial endorsed them. "...they promised better agricultural research, higher salaries, improved facilities and ultimately the consolidated school would build up the community by drawing the surrounding farm population together."[50]

Participatory Democracy

The final theme that characterized the Country Life Movement was a re-commitment to the concept of participatory democracy. As indicated above, rural life writers universally advocated organization, cooperation, and consolidation for farm businesses, social groups and local institutions. In order to counter the impression that they were promoting socialist ideas, most of them also directed the public's attention to the authentic practice of democratic principles.

> *The atmosphere in which socialism of the predatory kind can grow up does not exist among a prosperous farming community... I suggest that the orderly and safe progress of democracy demands a strong agricultural population... where husbandmen and men of small fortune predominate, government will be guided by law.*[51]

If the city represented lawless corporate greed, then the country exemplified orderly, direct democracy. The individualistic and self-reliant farmer became the model for the honest and responsible citizen whose common sense and practical knowledge was needed in an age of exploitation and ambition.

Once again, the reformers turned to education as a means by which rural people could be instructed in the exercise of their civic responsibilities. Bailey in particular threw his considerable influence behind the formation of farmer's institutes, legislative clubs, study groups and extension service education – anything that would educate and inspire rural people to act on their behalf for rural progress.

> *Every movement that tends to weaken local responsibility and initiative is a distinct menace to the people. Whenever the people are taught to look beyond their own institutions to federal institutions, they lose the opportunity and power to help themselves.*[52]

The Country Life Commission also called for the cultivation of new leaders among the youth.

> *The great need everywhere is new and young leadership and the Commission desires to make an appeal to all young men and women who love the open country to consider this field when determining their careers... we need young people who will live in the open country as permanent residents who while developing their own business... will still have unselfish interest in the welfare of their communities.*[53]

The country teacher and rural clergy were held responsible for carrying out this role.

The proper role for local professional leadership is to develop lay or farmer leadership. The country teacher, as a leader must teach independence and initiative ... and foster the latent possibilities of men, women and young people and send them to the front as guides and directors.[54]

The need for rural leadership is great and the opportunity for leadership and service belongs to the country teacher and minister... The teacher, because of his influence, can stimulate others into action. He needs to instill in his students a sympathy with country life; training for rural leadership is far more important than a knowledge of subject.[55]

Bailey, through the Country Life Commission, endorsed the concept of local decision-making for rural communities. Consistent with his belief that local needs and issues were best understood by those who resided in the community, Bailey argued that democracy at the state and federal levels was best served by local leaders.

State, national, educational institutions and philanthropists must allow native individuals responsibility and initiative to develop in the man who stands directly on the land. If it is necessary to stimulate enterprise, the effort should lie with the institution or agency nearest to the man and his problem.[56]

Bailey's strongest belief was that the expert should be "on tap not on top" and responsive to an educated and well informed community.

Plunkett, and those in Roosevelt's administration, took a very different view. They believed that the combined wisdom of agricultural experts in academia, government and private organizations were, in fact, the natural leaders of the rural life reform. They argued that "men who combine gifts of heart and mind to make the higher statesmanship will be found in the city rather than the country; ... they are the natural leaders of the Country Life Movement."[57]

Roosevelt's 'brain trust' looked to these leaders to provide a "comprehensive knowledge of public affairs, political imagination, and an understanding sympathy with a philosophic insight into the entire life of the community."[58] They perceived that an expansion of the federal and state agencies along with colleges of agriculture and agricultural experiment stations would be able to educate and inform rural communities as to the advantages and disadvantages of their environment.

The exercise of a wise advice, stimulus and direction from some central national agency, extending over a series of years could accomplish untold good not only for the open country but for all the people and for our institutions.[59]

The central agency should have a corps of experts to draft the practical details of a rural business combination. It must be in language the hardy rustic understands – fitting the plan to local conditions is a very expert business.[60]

The connection between agrarian values and an authentic, direct form of democracy would become a central philosophy in subsequent social reform movements. This style of democracy would always be found in small town meetings, civic organizations and the rural way of life. By contrast, *representative democracy* gradually came to dominate national politics. Urban areas, where people with wealth and power could manipulate local, state and national elections, would eventually control the democratic process for all.

Summary

According to William Bowers, the Country Life Movement died out in the early 1920s. President Taft, who followed Roosevelt, did not hold the same passion as Roosevelt for agrarian renewal and conservation of natural resources, and virtually all of the Country Life Commission recommendations were ignored during his administration. And the war which soon followed lessened interest in rural reform. Bowers and social historian Samuel Hays, however, hold the prominent writers and philosophers of the Country Life Movement accountable for the movement's failure to inspire the 'rural uplift' so many of them desired. Bowers states that the impetus for the movement came chiefly from people in the land grant colleges, state and federal departments of agriculture, professionals in education, publishers of farm journals, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, railroad and transport companies, and social reformers. He portrays them as, "young, comfortably middle class, urban, although of rural, Midwestern antecedents, Protestant, and well educated."[61] These individuals, according to Hays, shared a profound confidence in the well educated, experienced expert who was trained to research problems and offer solutions based on rigorous, scientific procedures. Seeing a need for rural areas to remain prosperous and productive, as well as retain bright and competent native Americans on their own farms, these experts saw rural America as a fertile laboratory for their experiments.

The farmers, states Bowers, often looked with suspicion upon these urban reformers whose gospel of agricultural efficiency was loaded with a rationale to conserve natural resources and organize farms into cooperative businesses,

> *One farmer in 1909 estimated that not more than 5% of the farmers of his state were in touch with the state agricultural college and experiment station.... . farm organizations described the state agricultural college as a 'cold storage institution of dead languages and useless learning.' They stressed production when the farmers needed better marketing and distribution.*[62]

Farmers in other regions, particularly the Northeast and South, faced very different problems and social situations from those in the West and the Midwest. The Country Life Movement, and particularly the Commission was focused predominantly on farmers and farming communities in the Midwest. Farm journals and local publications printed letters from farmers from other parts of the country who resented experts from urban areas who were perceived to be 'slumming' in the country to offer an 'uplift,'

> *The Maine Farmer (12.26.08) disliked what it termed an 'act of class distinction.'*

It was a mistake that the farmer should be singled out as a class for special reformatory work and be held up in the public eye as being in ignominious need of missionary reclamation.[63]

Angry about increasing federal regulations of resources and of trade, rural communities began to vote against most of the progressive reform; small town businesses aggressively fought against local farmer cooperatives. Resistance to new methods imposed by educated "outsiders" grew and many small towns resisted the movement to consolidate their local schools. The goals to redirect curriculum to reflect local places and to educate students for life in the country were by-passed in favor of standardized content areas and age graded classrooms required by state departments of education. Rural schools did not keep pace with their urban counterparts, and young people continued to look to the cities for opportunities. One Country Life institution, however, did survive and flourish. Bailey's goal to establish the Cooperative Extension Service in departments of state universities was eventually authorized by President Wilson in 1914.

Canadian Rural Life Reform:
The Antigonish Movement 1920 - 1950

At the turn of the century, the Canadian Maritimes began to experience debt and foreclosure when the economy shifted from subsistence living to a cash-based system, and corporate industries displaced small businessmen. From 1881 to 1930 more than 600,000 people emigrated from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick to urban areas in Canada and the United States. Improvement in communication and roads accelerated the rural decay making it easy for the young, the ambitious, and the restless to move away. Just as the Country Life Movement was waning in the American Midwest, a small, Catholic university began to introduce its own program of rural life education and economic reform in the small communities and farms of Nova Scotia.[64]

History

In the early 19th century, immigrants from Scotland and Ireland began to settle in the remote territory of Canada's maritime provinces. They were predominantly Catholic, working-class people whose marginal livelihoods came from small farms and coastal fisheries. One of the first institutions founded in the Diocese of Antigonish, Nova Scotia was a small grammar school . The school eventually grew to become St. Francis Xavier University and in 1853 it became a degree granting college for young men entering the priesthood and the professions and in 1883 it started a college for girls.[65]

In the 1920s, the idea of teaching common people to read and write, much less set up financial institutions in their local towns, was totally foreign to any Maritime university.[66] In 1921, Dr. J.J. Tompkins, president of St. Francis Xavier University at that time, per-

suaded 51 men (ages 17 to 57) to attend a two month program on the University campus. He called the experiment the People's School; its goals were to practice a "blend of adult education, Christian ethics, and social justice."[67] Tompkins' People's School merged the Wisconsin Idea[68] with the innovative structure of the Danish Folk Schools. He rooted his philosophy in cooperative principles which both emulated a Biblical communitarian vision and an economic competitive strategy committed to improving the lives of the working people in the region.

From 1924 to 1930, small groups of farmers and fishermen attended the study groups at the University which were organized primarily around issues of economics. As the movement grew it added programs for industrial workers from coal-mining towns. In 1931 the University finally committed resources to the founding of an Extension Teaching Department and formally recognized adult education as a part of the curriculum. By 1933 the People's School had launched a course for leadership training in conjunction with the Extension School. The following year, the Carnegie Corporation of New York made a grant of $35,000 to fund the work of the St. Francis Xavier Extension Department which was renewed every year until 1947.

Tompkin's objective was to train young people as Extension Education agents to organize and lead study groups in their own communities. The Extension leaders began to set up a network of study groups which were linked together by common goals: adult education, economic sustainability and participatory democracy. The University, through its Extension agents, delivered information and resources directly to the local towns, far distant from the University campus.

Educators and Philosophers

J. J. Tompkins

Tompkins is considered to be the prophet and founder of the Antigonish Movement. Born in Cape Breton Island, he came to St. Francis Xavier University in 1902 and became the Vice President in 1907. He immediately began to transform the university from a small college providing a routine education for the select few able to pay the fees into a nationally recognized university whose programs were directly aligned with the working people of Eastern Nova Scotia.

Tompkins traveled widely in Europe searching for new ideas and educational techniques which led him to study the folk education movement in Denmark. There, he discovered a philosophy about education that stressed the exchange of ideas through conversation – the belief that the deepest truths come not from rote study of classroom texts but from "life's enlightenment." Within the Danish Folk School Tradition, the goal of an enlightened society is to ensure that each person understands his or her own cultural history and traditions before they study the history and traditions of the world's cultures. The mechanism for this educational process was the small study circle where each individual could teach and learn in a dialogue based on mutual respect.[69] Danish folk schools fundamentally trusted the wisdom of ordinary people over and above the highly educated and the elite.

Tompkins spent the rest of his life developing and implementing his own version of these principles in what came to be known as the Antigonish Movement. Even as he was

enough of a realist to accept that the university, regardless of its enlightened leadership or its programs, would continue to be the conduit for young graduates to enter the modern world, he labored to change the belief that a university education was a stepping-stone to individual self-advancement and prosperity rather than an opportunity to take one's knowledge back to the people.

In 1923, Tompkins left the university and accepted the position of a parish priest in Canso, a fishing town on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia. Over the course of 25 years, he traded the language of the university for the language of the fisherman, farmer and miner. He passionately believed that if he could "awaken the people they would develop their own leaders, for the leaders were there buried in the debris of a collapsed system."[70] He visited local people in their homes, in the woods, in the boats, in the mines and along the roads. He held mass meetings and arranged dozens of tiny forums. His pedagogy included discussions about their poverty, their economic dependence, and their powerlessness and the external forces which perpetuated the system. He gave them difficult and complex ideas to work through and trusted that the power of those ideas would eventually motivate them to act in their own behalf. Tompkins often stated that "Ideas have hands and feet. They'll go to work for themselves."[71]

M.M. Coady

In 1927, a Royal Commission was authorized by the government in Ottawa to investigate the social and economic conditions in Nova Scotia. In order to revitalize the region, the Commission recommended that fishermen be organized for group action, that the formation of business cooperatives should be widely encouraged and that a campaign for adult education should be instituted. The government sent Dr. M.M. Coady to carry out the recommendations. Coady, also a native of Cape Breton Island, and cousin to Tompkins, had been teaching at a small school in Cape Breton prior to his appointment.

He began his work in the diocese of Antigonish by forming fishermen's federations and encouraging the development of credit unions and miners unions. After his work for the Ottawa government ended, he was made the director of St. Francis Xavier University. He founded the extension education department at the university and guided the work for many years.

Ideas and Themes

The philosophy of the Antigonish Movement, as defined and implemented by Tomkins and Coady, was built around improving the lives and the conditions for employment among the common people of the diocese. They recognized that education, whether public or parochial, had always been the escape mechanism whereby the bright, assertive few managed to transform their gifts into professional careers. They focused their attention instead on 'those left behind' and the need to develop economic and social programs that would sustain the farms and villages and stem the flow of families to industrial areas.

> *The Antigonish Movement presented itself to the world as the 'middle way' between the extremities of collectivism and individualism. The Movement was a populist one and it worked from the ground up rather than top down... The genius*

of the Antigonish Movement lay in its ability to provide its Catholic constituency with a new, transcendentally-based explanatory framework for life in an industrial society and a non-violent strategy for attaining the 'good and abundant life.'[72]

These leaders have gone down to the fishing hamlets on the Atlantic coast, to the impoverished farmers in the agricultural communities, to the miners in their dreary, dingy homes, preaching a deep and profound gospel of the dignity and ability of the common man. Because this gospel has been presented not as a vague and wishful doctrine but as a cogent and practical plan of action, a great change is taking place.[73]

The central principles of the Movement were grounded in education for social and economic justice, and the exercise of direct democracy:

- *Democracy stresses the value of cooperation and face to face interaction.*

- *Education must be linked to one's place and the issues inherent in that place.*

- *Schooling must be conducted in small group settings where ideas and strategies lead to direct action.*

The themes of the Antigonish Movement, although emphasizing adult education, can still be organized into the same categories defined by the Country Life Movement: Community Sustainability, Redirected Institutions and Participatory Democracy.

Community Sustainability

The effect of the industrial revolution in Canada was a shift in emphasis from a village-based, ethnically homogeneous society to a social order that stressed competition, mobility, and individual self-advancement. The introduction of scientific principles which strengthened the move toward a capitalistic, wage-based economy, undermined the interdependence of the traditional Anglo-Scottish communities, and threatened the spiritual security offered by the Catholic church. Tompkins, in particular, believed that the small farming towns and fishing villages embodied an authentic way of life, a deep and rich cultural heritage which was linked to their ethnic traditions and to their religion. He envisioned sustainable communities which contained the material benefits and services that were part of modern society, but did not sacrifice the spiritual values which characterized the culture.

Coady's solution was to build on communitarian principles in place of individualistic enterprise.

The masses of the common people must be able at all times to manipulate the forces that control society ... It should be in a free enterprise way which is a group activity - a cooperative effort such as labor unions, cooperative credit and insurance societies, consumer cooperative stores and group activities in the varied fields of service.[74] *One difficulty in establishing the business life of an old community*

upon a cooperative basis is the entrenchment of individual enterprise. It has been done in one way so long that the individualistic method has taken on the sacredness of tradition.[75]

The leaders of the Movement recognized that business and credit cooperatives were the most effective way for farmers, fishermen and miners to reclaim control over their economic futures. As individuals, they did not have enough power to compete, but as organized groups, they could "... relay back to themselves the new wealth that each creates in proportion as he creates it. It is the instrument of a functional society where goods and services are produced for use and not for profit."[76] Dr. Coady relates the example of a group of 28 coal miners with a combined capital investment of $343 who in 1906 established a consumers' cooperative society in Cape Breton. By 1929 the society was managing four branch stores, a milk pasteurizing plant, a bakery and a tailor shop. The business turnover was $1,730,000 in that year.[77]

Redirected Institutions

Like the Country Life Movement, the leaders in the Antigonish Movement were university educators. They were also Catholic priests. Their desire to fight the extreme poverty of their region and bring resources and hope to their constituents was not only a product of their religious mission, it was sound, economic common sense.

In their experience, formal education in the region had always been focused on abstract, academic knowledge.

We preach and teach in the abstract. We expect the common man to transfer our abstract doctrines into concrete actions. We perpetuate the old educational fallacy that abstract knowledge is sure to transfer to the realm of practical life... we shall prepare man to carry out the idealism that religion teaches.[78]

The purpose of formal education, particularly at the university level, was to prepare the individual to leave his (or her) community and enter the competitive, professional world.

Education is the instrument that unlocks life to any free people. But primary and secondary education has been the escape mechanism by which the bright and vigorous few... got into the higher professions... Education has been an instrument that has created classes in a classless society... we can pick from the masses of people enough to supply business and industry and service professions. The great masses are left behind. The kind of life they are leading does not call for education.[79]

The Antigonish reformers reasoned that in order to build self-sufficient local communities and provide leadership opportunities for young people, the schooling needed to be oriented to the real-life concerns of those communities. Redirecting the university meant awakening the people socially, culturally and spiritually to the acceptance that their self-reliance and self respect would only be won by gaining control of their economic destiny.

Our experience in the Antigonish Movement is that there is more real adult education at the pit-heads, down in the mines, out in the fisherman's shacks, along the wharves and wherever the farmers gather to sit and talk in the evenings than you can get from $100,000 worth of fossilized formal courses. It springs from the hearts and pains of the people.[80]

As Dr. Coady states, "education is what remains after we forget all we have learned in school."[81] The initial strategy was for an extension worker along with the parish priest, to call a town meeting. The meeting was an exchange between the extension worker and the townspeople in which their specific local problems were related to wider issues of economic and political exploitation.

(the mass meeting) has two functions: 1. to break up the existing mind-sets, and 2. to help people make up their minds anew to rebuild themselves and society. It is important that people be shocked out of their complacency to begin an honest search for the truth.[82]

The redirected schooling began with the premise that every ordinary man and woman was a potential student and every small group of concerned men and women was a potential study group. The curricula would emerge from the discussions of their most pressing problems.

Uneducated farmers, fishermen, and miners met by night in their little study groups to talk over what was wrong with themselves and their lot – and what to do about it. Some of them had to learn to read and write before they could begin to take definite action. But they did learn, and they did swing into action.[83]

From the study club, members moved to community rallies once a month, then a number of communities gathered in area meetings called associated study clubs. Finally they came to an annual conference at the University known as the Rural and Industrial Conference. By the end of 1931, 173 study clubs were underway.

Some of the projects which resulted from this intense educational effort included: lobster canning cooperatives, community boats, a goat milking program, community night school, maritime livestock shipping association, cooperative consumers' stores, a miners union, women's handicrafts, blueberry canning cooperatives, purchasing companies, codfish pickling plant, and most important of all, the local credit union.

At the university, the educational program focused on leadership training. Professors instituted two different training courses which specialized in community organizing and the administration of business cooperatives. The students for these courses came directly from the study clubs and ultimately returned to their communities to serve as teachers and leaders.

The range of topics which study groups examined included, the consumer cooperative movement, the credit union movement, various schemes of social insurance, and the needs and the problems of the common man. Women leaders who attended the training programs introduced the study of homemaking problems, handicrafts, health and rural recreation. In the early 1930s the study clubs began to produce their own instructional

materials which were organized and printed as *The Bulletin of the Extension Department.* The different departments included: Education, Economic Studies, Credit Studies, Fishermen's Affairs, The Woman's Page, Labour Forum, and The Farm Study Club. "These departments represented 'the Movement' and were the common source of knowledge and information which all shared."[84]

The impetus for reform which sought to revitalize the education of the Canadian Maritimes, also made an impact on the Catholic church. The leaders at the university believed that once men and women had resolved their most pressing economic needs, they would be able to rededicate themselves to spiritual work. Inspired by the philosophy of Pope Pius XII who emphasized that the church's social program is the more equitable distribution of wealth, parish priests began to redirect the mission of the church to social causes.

Participatory Democracy

Harry Boyte in his book, *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work* (1996) reintroduces an old and revered concept of civic life – the commonwealth. His view is that the commonwealth represents the ongoing commitment of residents to work together toward "developing the capacity of communities to problem-solve. As an alternative to conventional "expert" practice, it was counter-cultural in the emerging technocratic world."[85] Boyte's thesis profoundly challenges the idea that the role of 'government' is to deliver services and benefits and the citizens' role is to be a consumer and to vote. Rather, he argues that the work of the commonwealth is the face-to-face experience of identifying and building up the spiritual and material wealth of the community.

The reformers of the Antigonish Movement integrated the ideas of the commonwealth and participatory democracy into their programs. The 'wealth' of the small farming towns, fishing villages, and working-class urban neighborhoods resided in committed, well trained leaders and in the cooperative institutions that guaranteed access to resources for everyone. Coady and his colleagues utilized the passion for democracy already deeply ingrained in the local people and set the university to help mobilize these attitudes. Without leadership, they reasoned, the mass of people would not be able to accomplish the monumental task of rebuilding society and its economic institutions. Without a commitment to work together for common renewal, the forces of competition would divide and separate the rich from the poor, the powerful from the weak. The principles of cooperation, whether for economic survival or political parity, were central to the concept of the commonwealth.

> *The impulse must come from the people if there is to be a move that will recreate and resurrect the [large]dream instead of destroying it. The natural leaders of the people must be developed in their own ranks and must take their places at the head of the march away from centralization and its attendant poverty, dependence and slavery... the change will take place only as the people themselves regain ownership, democratically and intelligently, of those things which they have allowed a system of economic feudalism to take from them.*[86]

Summary

By the end of the 1940s, the Carnegie Foundation's financial support of the extension program came to an end, and both Tompkins and Coady had died within a few years of one another. Nonetheless, the concept of rural educational reform had matured and expanded to embrace a wider vision. That vision was rooted in the idea of the commonwealth which sought to build up the spiritual and material wealth of society by meeting the needs and concerns of local communities. The tool they used was education, broadly conceived, whereby adults became students of their environment, their history and their economic potential. By educating people, young and old, for real-life situations, they prepared them to acquire some measure of control over their economic futures.

The leaders of the Antigonish Movement practiced their philosophy of taking knowledge to the people. They removed the experts from the university and placed them side-by-side with leaders in small, poor communities. They put the resources of the university in the hands of common people who used them to understand more about their own environments and the potential which existed there. This model of leadership and community development proved to be an enduring one and in some respects has ties to the work of the Rural Challenge.

Conclusion and Reflections

The Country Life Movement and the Antigonish Movement emerged in response to the needs of common people for economic and educational parity. The emphasis was on revitalizing the whole community through a multiplicity of means, and education was a central component of the revitalization focus. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the cooperative extension departments as well as the public schools provided adults and children with the tools to help their communities become economically viable. Nonetheless, the city remained the standard by which the rural community measured itself, particularly in terms of providing challenging opportunities for the young.

Within thirty years, the abandoned farms and small towns were becoming second or in some cases first homes for affluent middle-class people who were fleeing the cities. In re-populating rural areas, they brought with them the values and expectations of their urban past. Many ran for school board or town selectman; they formed planning and zoning committees and began to shape the destiny of the community, in particular the schools. The schools became the battleground on which newcomers and natives fought for their childen's future. One side favored consolidation and norm-referenced achievement standards; the other side favored the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" approach to schooling.

The Annenberg Rural Challenge is an heir to these earlier movements. It is well on its way to becoming a post-industrial, turn of the millenium educational reform movement. It hopes to become a model for other school reform initiatives, first by re-committing to the principles of earlier movements: a focus on economic sustainability, creating a pedagogy that uses the community as laboratory and text, engaging parents, congregations, community leaders and local businesses in the day-to-day activities of the school, and most important, developing leadership through direct action on behalf of the community.

In the next four years, the participants in the Annenberg Rural Challenge will be looking for ways to challenge the stereotypes which imply that rural is inferior, backward, or out of touch. Schools and communities will be challenging the myth in which the only way for the ambitious or restless young person to have a successful life is to move to the city. Families and neighbors will be challenging the deeply ingrained cultural model which glorifies the individual who is mobile and unattached. As one young middle-school social studies teacher in Jonesport, Maine put it, "We're still in the short rows, just planting the seeds."

Notes

[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, "Social Forces in American History," *American Historical Review* (New York, 1911), 217.

[2] Ibid., p. 222.

[3] William Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America 1900-1920* (New York & London: Kennikat Press, National University Publications, 1974).

[4] Sir Horace Plunkett, *The Rural Life Problem of the United States: Notes of an Irish Observer* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1912).

[5] According to the report of the Commission on Country Life , the Commissioners had two months in which to accumulate data for this national study on rural life. They were leading academicians, journalists, and public servants. Only two, however, Barett from Georgia, who was president of the Farmers' Cooperative and Educational Union of America, and Henry Wallace, editor of Wallace's Farmer , had any direct connection to farmers. The strategies they used to collect data included sending 550,000 surveys to all of the nation's farmers of which 115,000 were returned and 100,000 were classified and tabulated. The commissioners also held 30 public meetings in 40 major cities across the country, encouraged small towns to hold their own meetings in local schools and libraries and gathered information by personal correspondence and inquiries. Perhaps the most effective method for reporting on the work was the extensive coverage given to the Commission and its report by the nation's newspapers, journals, and magazines. William Bowers, in *The Country Life Movement in America 1900-1920*, states that the farmers rejected the reformers' suggestions that there was a crisis in country life. They argued that if the farmer were given economic justice and a fair shake to make a living, that would take care of the social concerns. Many farmers perceived the Country Life Commissioners as patronizing and condescending because "few of them had actual roots in the workaday rural world. . ." p. 102-105.

[6] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Country Life Movement in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), p. 16.

[7] Donald Jerome Tweton, "The Attitudes and Policies of the Theodore Roosevelt Administration Toward American Agriculture," Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1964, p. 32.

[8] The Sixtieth Congress, Senate Document No. 705, "Report of the Country Life Commission," (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), p. 9.

[9] Bailey (1915), op. cit., p. 220 & 205.

[10] Bowers, op. cit., p. 49-57.

[11] Ibid., p. 28-29.

[12] Plunkett, op. cit., p. 130.

[13] The Country Life Commission, op. cit., p. 23.

[14] Elwood Cubberley, *Rural Life and Education: A Study of the Rural-School Problem as a Phase of the Rural-Life Problem* (Boston, New York, Chicago: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914), p. 55.

[15] Mabel Carney, *Country Life and the Country School: A Study of the Agencies of Rural Progress and of the Social Relationship of the School to the Country Community* (Chicago: Row, Peterson and Company, 1912), p. 8.

[16] Bailey (1915), op. cit., p. 15.

[17] Ibid., p. 99.

[18] Plunkett, op. cit., p. 93.

[19] Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York: Penguin Books, USA, 1920/1980), p. 258.

[20] Bailey (1915), op. cit., p. 24.

[21] The Country Life Commission, op. cit., p. 14-15.

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[22] Plunkett, op. cit., p. 94.
[23] Ibid., p. 160.
[24] Tweton, op. cit., p. 39, 48.
[25] The Country Life Commission, op. cit., p. 49.
[26] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The State and the Farmer* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 135.
[27] Joseph K. Hart, *Educational Resources of Village and Rural Communities* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914), p. 2.
[28] Bowers, op. cit., p. 5.
[29] Cubberley, op. cit., p. 173.
[30] Hart, op. cit., p. 7.
[31] The Country Life Commission, op. cit., p. 54.
[32] Carney, op. cit., p. 14.
[33] Harold Waldsteen Foght, A.M., *The Rural School of the 20th Century: Its Characteristics and Its Problems*, (New York: The Macmillan Company), 1910, p. 14.
[34] Cubberley, op. cit., p. 93.
[35] Ibid., p. 170.
[36] Bailey (1908), op. cit., p. 139.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., p. 138.
[39] Bailey (1915), op. cit., p. 212-213.
[40] Ibid., p. 162.
[41] Bailey (1908), op. cit., p. 161
[42] Ibid., p. 160
[43] Bowers, op. cit., p. 58.
[44] Ibid., p. 108-110.
[45] Bailey (1908), op. cit., p. 132.
[46] The Country Life Commission, op. cit., p. 62.
[47] Hart, op. cit., p. 271.
[48] Foght, op. cit., p. 17.
[49] Carney, op. cit., p. 185-186.
[50] Bowers, op. cit. p. 81.
[51] Plunkett, op. cit., p. 50-51.
[52] Bailey (1908), op. cit., p. 98.
[53] The Country Life Commission, op. cit., p. 65.
[54] Carney, op. cit., p. 322-323.
[55] Cubberley, op. cit., p. 301-302.
[56] Bailey (1908), op. cit., p. 75.
[57] Plunkett, op. cit., p. 154-155.
[58] Ibid.
[59] The Country Life Commission, op. cit., p. 64.
[60] Plunkett, op. cit., p. 161.
[61] Bowers, op. cit., p. 3-4.
[62] Ibid., p. 106.
[63] Tweton, op. cit., p. 133.
[64] I have chosen to relate the Canadian rural reform movement inasmuch as it had close ties to the U.S. Country Life Movement and also has lessons for the current reform movement being encouraged by the Rural Challenge.
[65] Alexander Fraser Laidlaw, *The Campus and the Community: The Global Impact of the Antigonish Movement* (Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1961), 58.

[66] Michael R. Welton and Jim Lotz, "Knowledge For The People: The Origins and Development of the Antigonish Movement," in *Knowledge For the People: The Struggle for Adult Learning in English-Speaking Canada*, No. 18 (Ontario, Canada: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1987), p. 102.
[67] Laidlaw, op. cit., p. 57.
[68] In 1890, the University of Chicago began a program of University Extension Teaching which spread throughout the Midwestern and Eastern United States. The Extension movement reemerged in 1906, according to Canadian historian Alexander Laidlaw, at the University of Wisconsin under the direction of Charles R. Van Hise. "The Wisconsin Idea' was about . . . carrying the University to the homes of the people. It attempts to give them what they need - endeavors to interpret the phraseology of the expert and offers benefits of research to household and workshop, municipality and state" (Laidlaw, p. 51).
[69] Steven M. Borish, *The Land of the Living: The Danish Folk High Schools and Denmark's Nonviolent Path to Modernization* (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin Press, 1991), p. 167-170.
[70] Bertram Baynes Fowler, *The Lord Helps Those . . . How the People of Nova Scotia are Solving Their Problems Through Cooperation* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1938), p. 21.
[71] Ibid., p. 25.
[72] Welton, op. cit., p. 107-108.
[73] Fowler, op. cit., p. 4.
[74] Laidlaw, op. cit., p. 109.
[75] Moses M. Coady, *Masters of Their Own Destiny: The Story of the Antigonish Movement of Adult Education Through Economic Cooperation* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1939), p. 25.
[76] Ibid., p. 123.
[77] Ibid., p. 37.
[78] Ibid., p. 149.
[79] Laidlaw, op. cit., p. 100.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Coady, op. cit., p. 31.
[82] Ibid., p. 30.
[83] Fowler, op. cit., p. 14.
[84] Laidlaw, op. cit., p. 81.
[85] Harry C. Boyte and Nancy Kari, *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), p. 76.
[86] Fowler, op. cit., p. 178.